

Conference held to prepare hundreds of students with disabilities for future

Wilmington, DE – On December 7th from 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., hundreds of local high school students with disabilities attended a transition conference at the Dover Downs Hotel in Dover, DE, focusing on their future career and employment goals as well as learning what's current in transition services for youth with disabilities in Delaware.

Transition services help students with disabilities prepare for postsecondary choices leading to employment which include education, skill development, and supported employment.

Now in its 15th year, the **"Shared Work, Shared Vision, Delaware Community of Practice 2016 Transition and Self-Determination Conference"** plays a key role in helping students make an informed choice after high school by providing current information through a variety of resources. This one day – parents, teachers, and organizations – come together to provide resources to help students look to their future career choices and goals.

"All students, including those with disabilities need to develop a career pathway leading to successful employment," said Delaware Department of Labor Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director Andrea Guest. "The Transition Conference provides tools for self-advocacy and the opportunity for students to learn how to reach their career goals."

The event's 17 workshops were shaped around the supportive nature of the transition community: there were topics for students with disabilities, parents, teachers, and Vocational Rehabilitation staff. Sessions included "Writing Realistic

Post School Goals” and “Times, They Are A’ Changing...Assistive Technology for Professionals.” A financial coach leads the Closing Session.

DVR is committed to providing individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace. In 2016, DVR placed more than 1,204 people with disabilities into careers and jobs throughout Delaware and the country; more than 300 of those placed were students transitioning from school to employment.

“This type of conference is important now more than ever to prepare students for our global economy,” said DOL Secretary Patrice Gilliam-Johnson. “Students with disabilities need to be prepared by thinking about career planning and employment at earlier ages for many reasons including that people with disabilities often experience barriers to employment.”

The conference is a collaborative effort between the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Department of Education (DOE), Division for Visually Impaired (DVI), and the Division of Development Disabilities Services (DDDS) along with a variety of other agencies and organizations.